

Community Action Program of Cortland County, Inc.

2012 – 2015 Strategic Plan

Program Planning and Evaluation Committee:

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I. Introduction

Background and Purpose

In June of 2011, CAPCO's Board of Directors and Management Team initiated the organization's third strategic planning process. The process was designed to engage both board and staff members in a comprehensive look at the organization, its environment, and the strategic issues that will both challenge and support its success during the next three years. The Program Planning and Evaluation Committee provided oversight to the process, and reported regularly to the full Board of Directors as planning activities were completed and recommendations emerged.

In contrast to its two previous strategic planning processes, this one has been undertaken during a particularly volatile economic and political time in the history of the Community Action movement. During the 2011 State of the Union address, Community Action Agencies across the country became a very visible part of the national debate on deficit reduction. The simultaneous threat of funding cuts, not only to the Community Service Block Grant Program, but to four of the programs that Community Action Agencies frequently sponsor – Weatherization, WIC, Head Start and Early Head Start - was unprecedented in scope and potential impact on low income families. The 'forecast' was changing on a daily and weekly basis, and CAPCO's leadership was challenged to communicate these changes to both staff and board members as quickly and as fully as possible, while supporting staff in their commitment to high quality service provision and meaningful interactions with customers and community partnerships. Meanwhile, at the program level, staff members were recognizing more significant needs among the individuals and families already engaged in services, and were responding to an increasing number of requests from people who were seeking services for the first time.

Against this backdrop, CAPCO's leadership recognized that this environment would demand significant changes to established practices in service planning and provision, communication – internally and with critical local, statewide and national partners - and to the number and nature of revenue sources and other supporters.

In recognition of these factors, the planning process was designed with two themes in mind. The first was to engage more staff and board members than in past years, sharing information more widely and involving more people in exploring and generating solutions. The second was to structure that broader involvement so that, across the organization, the discussion focused everyone's attention on similar core questions. Examples questions, asked in focus group, retreat and facilitated meeting formats with diverse audiences, follow:

1. *What do we (as a team, as a board, as an organization) do that makes the most significant difference to the people we serve and to the community? What do we do best (as a team, as a board, as an organization)?*
2. *What does “stability” look like for an individual or a family, and what basic services do we provide that are most successful in helping people to establish greater stability for themselves and their families?*
3. *What basic needs do we recognize in the people we serve, but are not addressing currently?*
4. *What are we doing now that we shouldn’t do – that we either don’t do well or no longer see as a compelling community need?*
5. *What are the most critical external challenges and opportunities that will influence CAPCO’s success in this environment?*
6. *Given these challenges and opportunities, what practices, program and/or staff configurations, systems, facilities, skills, knowledge or other aspects of organizational capacity do we MOST need to develop or improve?*
7. *What partnerships do we need to develop, restructure, formalize or otherwise invest in?*
8. *What can we do, as individuals and as teams, to take CAPCO’s effectiveness to the next level?*

Planning Activities and Timeline

The planning process began in the spring of 2011 with preliminary input from direct service staff. The Management Team and Board of Directors were then engaged, in retreat and facilitated meeting formats respectively, in a comprehensive review of mission and core values, and then in the assessment and discussion of known – and anticipated - trends, challenges and opportunities. Once the Program Planning and Evaluation Committee had reviewed written summaries of these discussions and shared the findings with the Board of Directors, a series of structured conversations were held with the staff of each program. Summary data from these conversations were added to the organizational assessment, and in late October, the Management Team met to identify goals and strategies for review and discussion by the Committee and the full Board of Directors. Their input has been incorporated in this document.

Plan Document and Monitoring

The document itself is organized in the format first introduced in the 2008 plan, aligning CAPCO’s priorities with the national CSBG goals. The mission and values statements remain basically unchanged, based on the Board of Directors’ affirmation that they are still a meaningful expression of CAPCO’s most essential purpose and beliefs.

In each of the three impact areas identified in the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) model - **Individuals/Families, Community, Agency Capacity/Partnerships** - strategic direction statements have been developed. These

serve as broad vision statements for CAPCO's intended impact during the next three years. Each of the three strategic direction statements is supported by a program goal, an administrative goal and a governance goal. Each of these nine (9) goals are accompanied by guiding strategies that will guide action planning. This structure has worked well for the organization in the past and will provide a practical format for regular updates and reporting, as well as the ongoing discussion of emerging needs and any related adjustments. **The Program Planning and Evaluation Committee and Management staff will continue to review the elements of the Strategic Plan and evaluate outcomes and performance indicators on a quarterly basis.**

II. Mission and Core Values

CAPCO is dedicated to providing and advocating for community-wide actions and programs that increase individuals' dignity and self-reliance and improve community conditions, engaging all sectors of the community in Cortland County's fight against poverty.

We value:

1. The voices and experiences of the people we serve, and their full participation in our community.
2. Respect for ourselves, and all those with whom we come in contact in our work.
3. Accountability for our resources and results to our participants and our community.
4. Cooperation and partnership within CAPCO and with the individuals and organizations, locally, statewide and nationally, which support our mission.
5. A commitment to understanding our own and others' strengths, and using these strengths to support our program, management and governance activities.

III. Strategic Directions, Goals and Strategies

<p><i>Impact on</i> →</p> <p><i>Accountability</i></p> <p>↓</p>	<p>Family & Individuals</p> <p>CAPCO services and supports will provide opportunities for people in Cortland County to increase their self-reliance, improve their economic circumstances, and strengthen their connections to family and community.</p>	<p>Community</p> <p>CAPCO’s programs, advocacy and leadership role in the community will result in improved conditions and greater influence for individuals and families in community-wide initiatives to change the public’s response to poverty in Cortland County.</p>	<p>Agency Capacity</p> <p>CAPCO will increase its capacity to develop and align diverse partnerships, revenues, human resources and organizational systems to address critical community needs, as an effective leader in Cortland County’s efforts to break the cycle of poverty.</p>
<p>Program</p>	<p>1 CAPCO will refine, reconfigure and/or expand existing programs to help individuals and families achieve greater social and economic stability.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement the Family Resource Center model consistently across sites. 2. Support people seeking employment with basic skills and resources, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Literacy, fiscal literacy, personal hygiene, nutrition, laundry, housekeeping and related life skills b. Specific job-search skills 	<p>2 CAPCO will develop and strengthen linkages between existing CAPCO and community resources to improve access to both formal and informal supports for individuals and families.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support contacts and referrals between existing CAPCO programs and other local organizations who do – or can – provide services to CAPCO families: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Make updated resource and contact info available to all staff. b. Identify all current 	<p>3 CAPCO staff will gain competency, professionalism, and leadership abilities, working as a team to engage customers, improve programs and build community partnerships.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide staff development that focuses on helping families move along the continuum from crisis to stability and, with support, toward advancement. 2. Build stronger staff teams, within and between programs. 3. Increase staff and organizational flexibility and continuity by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Providing opportunities for agency staff to observe other programs or functional areas

	<p>(through CAPCO or other appropriate community resources)</p> <p>c. Interview and workplace-appropriate clothing</p> <p>3. Shift customer and staff focus from reliance on public benefits to the specific combinations of formal and informal supports that will help motivate greater self-reliance in people with different skills, goals and experiences with “the system”.</p> <p>4. Develop consistent systems within Family Development, to support the program’s goals.</p> <p>5. Generate more accurate referrals between agency programs.</p> <p>6. Create more effective relationships with families, employing:</p> <p>d. Technology (e.g. texting is effective with HS families)</p> <p>e. Face to face communication techniques</p> <p>f. More contacts structured in advance for greater engagement</p> <p>g. Safety planning for staff/customer interactions</p>	<p>organizational partners (at the program level) and make that information available to all staff.</p> <p>3. Develop and facilitate informal networks of support that bring individuals and families together around common interests, needs and info-sharing (e.g. Parents with Hope, Monday Moms w/Helping Hands, Caring Heart, Parent Action Groups, Breastfeeding Support Group, Policy Council, Health Advisory Board), considering:</p> <p>a. More collaborative efforts w/other organizations</p> <p>b. More focus on families own resources and connections</p> <p>c. Self-advocacy skills</p> <p>2. Identify partners to collaborate in providing wrap-around services for both Early Head Start and Head Start.</p> <p>3. Build stronger relationships with schools to support children and their families during the transition from HS to school.</p> <p>4. Support WAP staff w/referral information and procedures.</p>	<p>b. Cross training within and between program areas when skills and functions align</p> <p>c. Expanding orientation for new hires to include greater emphasis on the whole organization and its role in the community, in addition to program and position-specific skills and information.</p> <p>d. Assuring that all staff are knowledgeable about the value of CAPCO benefits.</p> <p>4. Develop consistent supports (communication tools, messages, mentoring and supervision skills) for managers’ ability to emphasize productivity and a unified focus, despite a challenging economy and funding environment.</p> <p>5. Continue CAPCO’s practice of hiring individuals who have used CAPCO’s programs.</p>
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	<p>6. Position CAPCO to take advantage of opportunities that will allow programs to grow or change for greater impact in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Energy Services b. CDPAP c. HS/EHS d. Family Development e. WIC (nutrition and physical activity) f. Other areas identified in the current HS Needs Assessment 		
<p>Administration</p>	<p>4 CAPCO will develop new responses to changing community needs, continually improving programs and services so that families and individuals experience better outcomes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate or reconfigure programs to better serve families/individuals, helping to spread costs across funding sources, and recognizing commonalities in customer need and staff skills. 2. Use program outcome data 	<p>5 CAPCO will partner with other community groups and organizations to develop new responses to jointly identified community needs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen the collaboration between Family Essentials and Employment Connection to support CAPCO families as they address their job readiness. 2. CAPCO will participate in further defining and developing responses, as resources and relationships allow, to the following community-recognized 	<p>6 CAPCO will develop operational capacity that supports continuous quality improvement, innovative responses to community need, and sustainability planning for the organization.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continually evaluate priorities for improvement to CAPCO facilities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. More administrative and program space, additional parking b. Building security concerns c. Easier customer access to WIC and Family Essentials d. Centralization to support internal communication

	<p>consistently to improve programs and support momentum in staff and customer progress.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Using existing data to tell a compelling story (within programs, in training, to the Board, to the public) b. Monitor and respond to changing and unmet needs, based on internal data analysis and ongoing planning for partnering, advocating, upgrading staff skills and/or changing CAPCO’s service configuration. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Expand CAPCO’s capacity for fee-for-service work across agency programs. 4. Develop a consistent agency-wide response to the disclosure of child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse. <p><i>The following issues have been identified as unmet needs among individuals and families already involved with CAPCO. As opportunities arise, CAPCO will</i></p>	<p>unmet needs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Safe, affordable, accessible housing, including security deposit assistance and housing for new moms</i> b. <i>Home repair services</i> c. <i>Living wage jobs</i> d. <i>Transportation – public, as well as access to insurance and repairs for car owners</i> e. <i>Food insecurity</i> f. <i>Substance abuse treatment</i> g. <i>Mental health treatment</i> h. <i>Adults without health insurance</i> i. <i>Access to medical and dental care</i> j. <i>Mentoring services for youth</i> k. <i>Teen pregnancy</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Develop more effective and/or specific relationships with the following community partners: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. DSS (home visitor contract) b. Health Dept (breastfeeding, maternal child health, early intervention) c. Medical/dental providers d. Youth Bureaus e. Legal Aid f. Businesses 4. Support community discussions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Continue to adapt fiscal systems to support a dynamic budgeting process: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Effective cash-flow planning b. Accurate and timely reporting to funders c. Contingency budgeting in response to potential/actual funding cuts d. Educated decision-making by executive staff and board members in response to environmental changes e. Long term sustainability planning across agency programs 3. Institute fund development planning (<i>shared strategy with Board</i>) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Build on Community Action Angels to develop relationships and bring in support b. Recruit board or committee members with fund development experience c. Seek board and staff training on fund development planning d. Consider the costs and benefits (in funds raised and cultivation opportunities) of a range of fund development activities 4. As resources are available, improve IT capacity to include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Universal server and internet access b. Updated hardware and software
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	<p><i>consider developing programs or partnerships to respond.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>a. Supervised visits</i> <i>b. Transportation – strollers, wagons, bikes to loan?</i> <i>c. Supports for foster children</i> <i>d. Support for people with education goals – literacy, math, other basic skills</i> <i>e. Access to health and dental care</i> 	<p>convened by Seven Valleys regarding the local development of a 211 system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>c. Additional training for users</i> <i>d. Full implementation of the new fiscal software</i> <i>e. Innovative technological supports for staff, consumer and community communication, including social media</i> <i>f. Online giving</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop a more unified and consistent leadership message to staff, including clear expectations, positive feedback and the contribution of each program or activity to the success of CAPCO’s overall mission. 6. Diversify revenues and develop operating and capital reserves through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fee for service programs b. Grants from nontraditional sources c. Fundraising 7. Formalize CAPCO’s approach to risk management planning, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A Safety Program for May 2012 implementation across the organization b. The annual identification of critical risks to CAPCO’s reputation, fiscal stability, customer and staff health and safety, with corresponding plans of corrective action. 8. Find creative ways to improve cross-agency communication, including:
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Governance	<p>7 <i>The CAPCO Board will assure that the agency's resources are directed to individuals and families, consistent with CAPCO's mission.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through the Program Planning and Evaluation Committee, actively involve board members in discussion related to all 	<p>8 <i>CAPCO's Board of Directors will be a community leader in the dialogue about poverty and its impact on individuals and families, changing community attitudes and values.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a more assertive role for the board as a convener of organizations and individuals who 	<p>9 <i>CAPCO will develop and sustain governance practices that support regulatory compliance, continuous quality improvement and innovative responses to community needs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Institute fund development planning (<i>shared strategy with Exec Team</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Build on Community Action

	<p>proposed program development, program performance and mission alignment.</p> <p>2. Engage board committee(s) in working with staff to relate program outcomes to the concepts of crisis, stability and sustainability.</p>	<p>have shared concern for the economic and social vulnerability of local individuals, families and communities.</p> <p>a. State common goals, and be the lead voice</p> <p>b. Develop partnerships to role-model shared responsibility for economic and social health of the community with government, other organizations and the public</p> <p>c. Address stigma related to poverty in the board’s communication with the community</p> <p>d. Develop closer alliances with elected officials.</p> <p>2. Invite Board participation in training and events that address poverty, economic development and other topics relevant to Community Action.</p>	<p>Angels to develop relationships and bring in support</p> <p>b. Recruit board or committee members with fund development experience</p> <p>c. Seek board and staff training on fund development planning</p> <p>d. Consider the costs and benefits (in funds raised and cultivation opportunities) of a range of fund development activities</p> <p>2. Assess board composition and function annually to guide Board Development Committee’s efforts in cultivating, recruiting and orienting new members</p> <p>3. Continue to adopt and improve best governance practices through regular training, ‘in-service’ updates and other supports to board knowledge and skills, including education on internal systems and program practices (e.g. waiting lists, other capacity issues).</p> <p>4. Consider changes to corporate structure to accommodate fee-based service provision, formal partnerships and other restructuring.</p> <p>5. Structure staff reporting to include ‘stories’ about families that demonstrate clear, measurable changes.</p>
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